

Edmonton Street News

ESN

Volume 8 Issue 6 2011



Davis Clapper receives a free hair cut from Myle, an instructor from Marvel College, at Homeless Connect on May 15 at Shaw Conference Centre. It was the 42nd hair cut she had done that day. Homeless Connect brought together a wide variety of service providers who volunteered their services to meet the needs of the homeless and the poor.

Vendors pay 50 cents per paper

Community Groups that offer Meals

Bissell Centre
10527-96 Street
780-423-2285

Inner City Pastoral Ministry
10527 - 96 Street
Lunch (sandwiches, fruit, veggies and desserts) Sunday noon to 1 p.m. after the church service.
Monday to Thursday
10:30 a.m. - sandwiches
Tuesday and Friday
noon - hot lunch for women
Friday 9:45 a.m. - sandwiches

Christ Church
12116-102 Avenue
780-488-1118
3rd Saturday of the month 5:30 meal

House of Refuge Mission
10339-95 Street
Daily -5:00 p.m. snacks
8:00 p.m. meal

Lighthouse Ministries
3010-119 Avenue
780-423-1277 or
780- 474-8086
Wednesday and Sunday
1:00 and 7:00 p.m. meal

Hope Mission
780-422-2018
Daily 7:00 to 7:45 a.m.
breakfast
Noon - lunch
5:00 tp 6:30 p.m. - supper

All Saints' Anglican Cathedral
10035 - 103 Street
780-428-6323
Thursday 12:45 p.m., Lunch
Friday 7:30 - 9:30 am.,
Breakfast (November to March)

Marian Centre
10528-98 Street
780-424-3544
Daily except Wednesday
12:00 to 12:45 p.m. meal
Closed from the 27th of each
month to re-open the 1st of next
month

Mustard Seed
10636-96 Street
780- 426-5600
Monday to Friday 7:00 to 8:00
supper
Zero tolerance of alcohol

Operation Friendship
9526-106 Avenue
780-429-2626
Monday to Friday
9:00 a.m. breakfast
Monday to Sunday
12:00 noon lunch
5:00 p.m. supper for seniors 55
and over only

Red Road Healing Society
4225-118 Avenue
471-3220
Tuesday and Thursday
5:00 p.m. meal
Friday - 12:00 to 1:00 soup and
bannock

Robertson Wesley United Church
10209 - 123 Street
780-482-1587
Second Saturday of each month
5:00 p.m. meal

Sai Sadan
9619-101 Avenue upstairs
Wednesday - 6:00 p.m. meal

Salvation Army
9620-101A Avenue
780-242-9222
7:00 to 9:00 p.m. - lunch
Monday and Friday
83 Avenue -104 Street (parking
lot|)

St. Peter's Lutheran Church
9606 - 110 Avenue
780-426-1122
Tuesday, Wednesday and
Thursday
7:00 to 9:00 a.m. breakfast

St. Faith's Anglican
11725-93 Street - parish hall
780-477-5931
Thursday - 12:30 p.m. soup
Saturday - 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.
breakfast
3rd Friday of the month - 7:00
supper

Victory Café and Soup Bar
13411- Fort Road
Monday - 5:30 to 6:45 meal

Edmonton Orthodox Reformed Church
11610 - 95A St.
Info: Pete Wright - 479-1860
www.orcurc.org
Thursdays 6:15 Soup & Study

B's Diner
100 Street and Whyte Avenue
Wednesdays 1 to 3 p.m.meals

Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre
15210-Stoney Plain Road
meals
Tuesdays 6 to 7 p.m.

Boyle Street community Services
7:00 a.m. daily - breakfast
11:30 daily - lunch
Edmonton Do Likewise Society
7:00 to 9:00 p.m. - lunch
Wednesday

Important Notice

Edmonton Street News is published by the Edmonton Society, a registered society in the province of Alberta. The paper is published monthly, and is sold on the streets of Edmonton and Calgary. Edmonton Street News is a member paper of the North American Street Newspaper Association and of the International Network of Street Newspapers. Edmonton Street News is not in any way connected with Homeless Organization of Canada.
Linda Dumont Managing Editor,
Edmonton Street News

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EDMONTON STREET NEWS

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Edmonton Street News is an independent publication produced by volunteers and sold by vendors on the street.

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The deadline for advertisements and submissions for the next issue is June 15th.

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Mission

Edmonton Street News Society provides a voice, employment and social support to those who need these, and communicates perspectives dealing with poverty and social justice, by education and communication activities, including publishing a street newspaper

Values/Beliefs/Guiding Principles

- We believe in being inclusive and encouraging
- We believe that human rights are fundamental to living together
- We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to earn and control their money
- We believe in journalistic and organizational professionalism and integrity
- We believe the public needs to know about issues around poverty and social justice
- We value community and connecting with others
- We value passion and determination
- We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, develop and use communication skills

The views presented in this publication are those of the writers.

Editorial

\$110: the value of the life of a poor and/or homeless man in Edmonton in 2011

Inmate death highlights jail overcrowding

(Headline, CBC online, May 14, 2011)

"(Alberta Union of Provincial Employees president Guy Smith) said the death highlights the staffing crisis at the remand centre." (From **Man killed in Edmonton Remand** was set for release, Edmonton Journal online, May 14, 2011)2

The headline from the CBC and the excerpt from the Edmonton Journal quoted above are accurate as to certain facts: the Edmonton Remand Centre is overcrowded and has been for years; and centre staff have contended for years that the facility is understaffed in relation to the number of inmates it typically holds and the conditions under which those inmates have to be kept. But the truth is not as simple as that, and the questions that must be answered in relation to this particular incident will not be resolved by Harper government plans for more and bigger jails or Alberta Union of Public Employees demands for more staff.

Building more jails and hiring more jailors may address some of the issues in the aftermath of the death of Barry Raymond Stewart, early in the morning of May 12. But those knee-jerk solutions will not address the real issues that seem so far to have been invisible to the media and others commenting on the matter: Who are we putting in jail? Why are we putting them in jail? Does it serve any practical purpose to put them in jail? Do we assess and manage them appropriately when we do put them in jail? What are the consequences of putting them in jail, for the inmates and for society?

Barry Stewart was, according to media reports, fined \$110 for being found on the LRT without proof of payment, then jailed when apprehended after failing to appear in court to answer for his transgression. The record will probably show he was jailed for failing to pay his fine, but the truth is more likely to have been that he was jailed because he could not afford a ticket to board the LRT and, not surprisingly given that circumstance, that he could not afford to pay the fine. Appearing in court would not have made much difference: he would have been ordered to pay the fine or go to jail for a couple of days. For a man who lived homeless at least part of the time, paying the fine would have been out of the question: the only rational (for him) "choice" would have been to go to jail. Some choice.

We may think that debtors' prisons do not exist in Canada any more. But they do. And for people like Barry Stewart, who cannot afford to pay (for them) outrageously high fines for minor, nuisance offences like being on the LRT without a ticket, or jaywalking, or panhandling, they may be unavoidable. Even if Barry Stewart had not died, putting him in jail over a ride on the LRT would have amounted to cruel and unusual punishment; that he did die simply reminds us of the futility of jailing poor people for minor debts. Or so it should: yet so far no one seems to be asking the obvious questions and drawing the logical conclusions.

Barry Stewart should not have been in jail on the morning of May 12, 2011. That he was there diminishes us as a society; that he died while there is a challenge for reform that we must not ignore.

And if that is true of Barry Stewart, it is perhaps even more true of Justin Caldwell Somers, Stewart's alleged killer. Just as it is

futile and inhumane to jail people who are poor for being poor, it is wrong to jail people who are mentally ill for being mentally ill. According to reports, Justin Somers was apprehended for breach of bail conditions. Now that he is charged with murder, information as to the reasons for his original arrest and bail are hard to come by (as they should be). But it is clear from the reports that have come forth, that he was mentally ill or, at least, in serious mental distress when taken to the Remand Centre: "Somers was originally assessed by a psychologist and recommended to be housed alone due to an unstable mental condition," according to an online report in the Edmonton Sun3. Later, again according to the same Edmonton Sun report, "As the facility filled up with new arrests Wednesday morning [May 11], (a Remand Centre staff member) claims that a senior official demanded Somers be re-evaluated. Somers was then placed in a cell with another inmate around 10 a.m." That other inmate seems to have been Barry Stewart, and Stewart's death seems to have been a direct and reasonably foreseeable consequence of his having had to share a room in a holding area with Justin Somers.

Justin Somers will go to trial for his actions, and it is not appropriate for us to predict the outcome. But it is appropriate for us—all of us, actually—to ask (and ask ourselves)

We may think that debtors' prisons do not exist in Canada any more. But they do.

should he, in his condition, have gone to the Remand Centre at all? Should a senior official, after Somers had been admitted and assessed as mentally unstable, demanded a reassessment for what appears to have been an administrative need: there was no room in the part of the jail set aside for mentally ill inmates, and he could not be placed in the general population while assessed as mentally unstable? Should the psychologist, given that demand, have acquiesced? Should society hold them accountable, as it will Justin Somers, who may not have been responsible for his actions?

News reports, taking their rhetoric from court reports, suggest that Barry Stewart opted or chose to spend time in jail in lieu of paying a fine. We suspect that what the court and the media after it describe as choice was, in fact, sheer, stark necessity.

It may seem fair and reasonable to cut some slack for the Remand Centre supervisor who demanded that Justin Somers be reassessed, to facilitate his placement, and the psychologist who went along with that demand. Given the circumstances at the Remand Centre, they may have felt they had no options or choices in the matter. There is sad irony in the fact that they probably did what they thought they had to do out of necessity, not as a choice, just as Barry Stewart accepted a fatal necessity of going to jail, rather than pay a fine. Barry Stewart died for his unavoidable necessity. What price will the responsible staff at the Remand Centre pay?

And what price will the governments and leaders pay who see social ills as matters for law-and-order-driven enforcement of laws and practices that achieve nothing except the illusion of control and security?

1. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/story/2011/05/14/edm-jail-death.html>

2. <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/killed+Edmonton+Remand+release/4781887/story.html>

3. <http://www.edmontonsun.com/2011/05/12/inmate-found-dead-at-remand>
By ESN staff

Man killed in Remand Centre "chose" not to pay fine

Barry Raymond Stewart, 59, was killed by another prisoner in the Edmonton Remand Centre May 10th because he "opted" to go to jail rather than pay a \$110 fine. He was picked up on outstanding warrants for fines after failing to appear in traffic court and sentenced to two days in jail. Justin Caldwell Somers, 25, has been charged with second-degree murder. The victim was allegedly sleeping on a mattress on the floor of a holding cell when he was stomped on the head 15 times before someone heard the noise.

Stewart would have been released later that day after serving time for failing to provide proof of payment on the LRT.

Stewart arrived at the remand centre May 10 and was held in a basement cell, in a unit reserved for those who had just arrived at, or were about to depart. Somers was his cellmate that night.

"The room he was in has a wall about three feet high and glass all around above that and then there are closed circuit monitors. How was this not observed?" Tom Engel, from the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association, asked. "They classified the guy charged with murder (Somers) as mentally ill and he was supposed to be kept away from other people. They reclassified him so they could put another person in there. It happens all the time due to lack of space. They reclassified Somers and put him in a small room with someone else, then didn't look after the victim. The poor guy (Stewart) got stuck in that cell"

Stewart had been to the remand centre 21 times since 1977, all for minor offences, mostly "to avoid" paying fines. Before his death, Stewart stayed in various shelters and hotels. He had recently stayed at the Salvation Army, and spent his final weeks in a room at the Grand Hotel on 103rd Street, until he left the beginning of May.

The Grand Hotel is sometimes rented for a few days or weeks by homeless people when they receive a cheque, and the Red Cross may pay for a room there for up to three days in emergency situations such as loss of housing due to fire, flood, or condemnation by the health board.

"It's ironic. Why is it that poor people wind up spending time in jail because they have no money. They say 'he chose' not to pay the fine. Why not tell the truth -- he couldn't pay the fine. How many fine defaulters were in there that day? The poor you put in jail, but someone who can, just pays the fine. And sometimes the police give fines as a panhandler control," Engel said.

David Climenhaga, director of communications for the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, blames overcrowding and understaffing. He said, "The situation there is serious understaffing. The Remand Centre was originally designed for 340. The government is saying the current capacity is now 743 -- I don't know how they came up with that number, but a lot of the time there are around 800 people in the facility. Without additional correctional peace officers there is danger to inmates and staff. We have a responsibility to protect people while they are in remand because they are not legally guilty, and also to protect people while they are in jail."

Stewart is the 20th homicide victim in Edmonton this year. His death was the second homicide in the history of the 743-bed centre. On Sept. 10, 2005, Todd Stevenson was beaten to death in his cell. No charges were ever laid.

A new \$586-million remand centre will finish construction next year. It is designed to hold roughly 2,800 inmates.

Can YOU pay your fine?

Jaywalking - \$250, aggressive panhan-

dling - \$250, drinking in public - \$115, Urinating in public - \$500, Riding on the LRT without proof of payment - \$110



Conditions in Edmonton Remand Centre

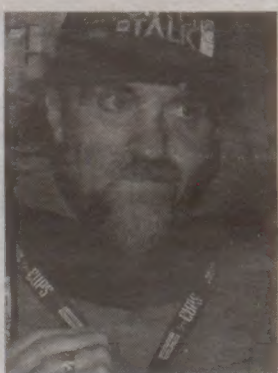
Tom Engel submitted testimony form court documents describing the conditions in the Remand Centre. The room in these documents is Tank 5, the Magic Room, which is used to warehouse prisoners going to and from court. It is called the Magic Room because from there you can go on to jail, to a mental health facility, be released, or be returned to the Remand Centre.

Joel Mongrain: Tank #5 is called the "Magic Room" because "you go in one door and you never come out the other" Joe Kochan: Tank 5 (the Magic Room) - "Every day in the morning and sometimes on return, prisoners are stuffed into it like sardines. The tank is filthy, stinks and the toilet is plugged. Prisoners expel gas, blow their nose on the floor, some stink because they don't shower; it's gross and disgusting. Prisoners don't flush the toilet, half the time there is no toilet paper."

Applicants were brought to the dorms at about 6:45 and sit there about one hour before the walk down the tunnel to the law courts. The most he ever saw in the Magic Room was 50 to 60 which would happen on busy court days. It would be so jammed you couldn't sit down. You would be there for 30 to 45 minutes before going to court but on the return trip you could be there two to five hours. There is one toilet, obscured by a half wall.

"The Tanks stink. There is blood and snot."

Rob's Corner



Street papers are more than a job

For the past 17 years and some months, going on 18 years, selling street papers is all I have known, more or less. Now that I just turned 60 it has become my mainstay, so much more important to me than ever before because at 60 with a Grade 8 education, there isn't much else out there for me work wise. There is also the plus that I am out in the fresh air making money, making new friends, working for myself and setting my own goals. I enjoy what I do!

Rob's Nite at the Plaza

Rob's Nite is an annual event at the Plaza Theatre in Kensington. Pete Harris, the program director, approached me back in March of 2000 and asked me if I was interested in them at the Plaza putting on a fundraiser for me, in my honour, as a way of thanking me for the little bit of help I provide around there. Basically, I inform people,

James Mah: "They pushed prisoners to get them in the Magic Room when it was overcrowded." Adrian Vergara was involved in a fight in Tank #5 because it was too crowded. Prisoners were also upset about the food and things like that. One day, prisoners were packed in Tank #5 and there was only standing room. People were getting "nasty." Some prisoners wanted another's food which remained from the bagged lunch served at the courthouse. If you are done at 11 or 12 in Court and the Edmonton Remand Centre is busy, you can stay in A&D until 6 or 7 p.m. That day, they had been in Tank #5 for two hours at least and there were about 50 prisoners in the Tank. Prisoners were standing on the benches and on the toilet. A fight broke out in which he was involved. He was charged and got 10 days

Keith Bruno was put into a Tank at about 12:50 p.m. Before he was put in the Tank he asked to use the bathroom, as he had been holding it during the trip. Despite repeated requests starting at 1:30 p.m. to use a bathroom, he was refused until 3:15 p.m. One of the guards he asked was "Raccoon": He wasn't returned to his unit until more than 5 hours after arrival. Dr. Abraham Cooper: "On return from Court or another institution you sit on a steel bench in the "Magic Room" for hours." The longest he sat was eight hours; most of the time three to four hours. The shortest was two hours. The conditions in the Tanks in are terrible. Sometimes there were 80 or 90 prisoners in the Magic Room, so many that they were wedged in so tight you could not fall down, when standing.

Stan Tomlinson (Edmonton Remand Centre Guard): On an average court day, prisoners were jam packed in the Tanks. It would be nothing to see 30 prisoners in the Magic Room. The air was very stale in the Magic Room. There was one toilet. The everyday sanitary conditions in the Magic Room were bad. Often there was feces or snot smeared on the walls. Prisoners urinated in the corners. When there was a government cleaning crew, it would be attended to promptly but you would see urine and snot and "stuff like that" on the walls for weeks and, for feces, sometimes a couple of days.

By Linda Dumont

give directions, clean up garbage outside the theatre, and often keep an eye on the theatre after concession staff have gone.

Thanks to all the staff at the Plaza in Kensington for their kindness and friendship past and present. Also thanks for allowing me to sell my street papers outside the theatre walls, and thanks to them for the free movies, pop, pop-corn, chocolate bars and coffee. How much I appreciate it I can barely put into words. This is the fourth street paper that I have sold in Kensington by the Plaza.

By Robert Champion

Minister Catherine Edith Flamond has a private agreement with the following men and women acting as Chief of Police for the City of Edmonton, the Minister of Transportation for the Province of Alberta, the Mayor for the City of Edmonton, the Premier of Alberta, the Solicitor for the City of Edmonton and the Justice Minister/Attorney General for the Province of Alberta to view this agreement go to: <http://allcreatorsgifts.blogspot.com/2010/10/minister-catherine-flamond-gets-private.html>

Outdoor way of the Cross focuses on healing a broken world

About 1,000 people attended the 31st annual Outdoor Way of the Cross prayer walk on Good Friday. The theme for the 2011 prayer walk through the inner city was healing a broken world. Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning, offered a reflection on the theme of healing for prisoners at the station in front of the Stan Daniels Healing Centre.



Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning before Stan Daniels.

Each year one station is used to remind us of global issues while other stops focus on more local matters. This year Joseph Luri spoke at Canada Place about the importance of Canadians voting to elect politicians who will be committed to ending poverty in the world. He talked about the peace process in his homeland of Sudan. The Way of the

Cross was started by Franciscans who still help to carry the cross each year.

Standing on the sidewalk of Jasper Avenue at 96th Street, Lewis Cardinal, a leader and activist in the indigenous community in Edmonton spoke about healing a hurting planet.

Story and photos by Jim Gurnett

2011 Enerflex MS walk raises more than \$500,000 for MS programs, services and research

A huge crowd of walk participants gathered around a band stage at the south end of Sir Winston Churchill Square to listen to the event's presentations along with its many notable speakers, who sincerely expressed their views on the neurological disease Multiple Sclerosis (MS), at the start of the 2011 Enerflex MS fundraiser on May 15.

1,800 participants raised over \$500,000 for multiple programs, services and research into multiple sclerosis.

Several names of political and social prominence gave their greetings while raising public awareness about MS and its impact afflicting 11,000 Albertans.

CFRN television personality Erin Isfeld hosted the stage presentation as MC while calling on several keynote speakers to the stage. Speakers included 2011 Enerflex MS walk spokesperson Julia Daniluck, who introduced Joshua Kelndorfer, a young walk participant who raised \$13,000 while walking for his mother who lives with MS.

Other speakers included Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada Alberta/Northwest Territories Division vice president Gary Wheeler, Enerflex representative John Samkoe, who spoke on MS and also later handed a cheque totaling \$137,500 on behalf of his organization to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada.

Mayor Stephen Mandel spoke on the progression of MS while also presenting a proclamation to the MS Society officially declaring the day, May 15, MS Day in Edmonton.

Laurie Hawn, MP for Edmonton Centre, was the last speaker to take to the stage and spoke admirably about the spirit of giving in the fight to find a cure for MS. Hawn said, "The face of MS is the face of 11,000 Albertans out there. The face of MS is out there. The face of the cure for MS is also out there. It's out there. It's out there for everybody participating. People like Enerflex, it's out there. All the volunteers and organizers, it's out there. In ordinary Albertans, ordinary Canadians, who care enough to come out on a day like today and get behind a terrible disease and to give hope to people suffering from MS. So if you can't get inspired from a child raising \$13,000 then you've got a heart



Walkers head out on a 12-kilometre walk on the northeast corner of 102 Avenue and 100 Street at Sir Winston Churchill Square in Edmonton. Photo by John Zapantis

of stone. So have a great day and a great walk. We look forward to doing this in the years to come."

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a neurological disease as it disables the central nervous system, which consists of the brain and spinal cord. The disease always attacks the myelin that serves as a protective covering wrapped around the nerves of the central nervous system. MS can cause loss of balance, impaired speech, extreme fatigue, double vision and paralysis. MS primarily afflicts young adults between the ages of 15 to 40, though it has been known to afflict toddlers as young as two. Researchers are closing in on a cure though the cause is unknown.

Erin Isfeld ended the presentation by calling to the stage two members of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Daryl Appleton, senior coordinator of corporate and community development for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada Alberta/Northwest Territories Division, and Scott Robson, manager of corporate and

community development for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada Alberta/Northwest Territories Division. The two gave their acknowledgements to the top fundraising team for 2010, Team Julia, who successfully raised \$96,435 in pledges.

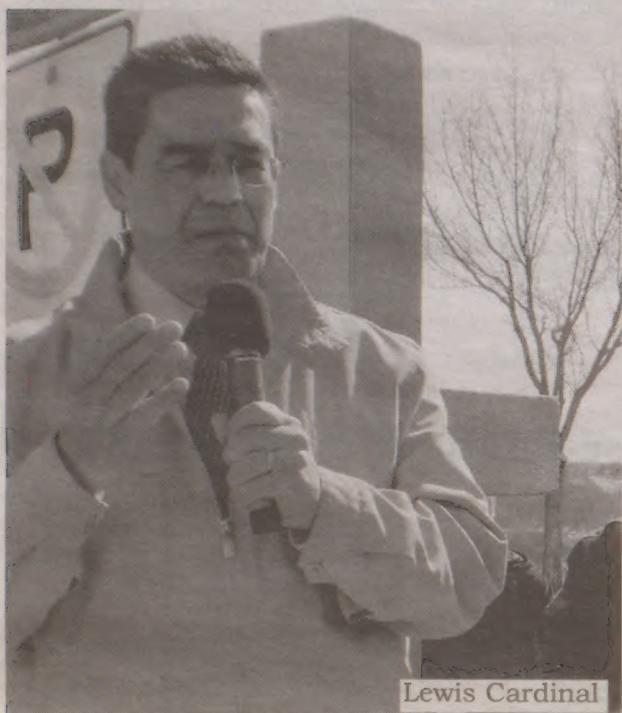
Right after the presentation ended the Edmonton Eskimos cheer leading team helped warm up the walkers with a brief musical exercise.

Just before the walkers left the starters gate, a young girl named Kristen McGovern sang O'Canada from the stage to onlookers in the audience, as walkers later lined up at 10 a.m for three separate walks that consisted of a 2 kilometre, 5 kilometre and 12 kilometre walk, from the northeast corner of 102 avenue and 100 street walking westbound along 102 avenue towards 107 street, followed by a left turn at 107 street going southbound along that street towards the Alberta Legislature building, down towards the River Valley road going westbound towards Government

Continued next page



Joseph Luri



Lewis Cardinal

MS walk continued

House and back to Sir Winston Churchill Square.

Mayor Stephen Mandel took time out after the presentations ended to give Edmonton Street News his views in supporting a very important cause. Mandel said, "Obviously, it takes a tremendous amount of people to support the walk. The intent of the walk is to begin to find a cure. To allow the people the kind of services they need and support. The MS society supplies that. So it serves a major purpose. I guess the third purpose really would be to raise awareness to the importance of the cause - how greater investment and research can find a cure."

Julie Kelndorfer, 36, lives with MS. She's married and has one son. She volunteers with the MS Society and is a director of government and community relations. She was at the MS presentations seated at a table with her son, Joshua. She was diagnosed for MS seven years ago at age 29. She said she discovered her earliest MS symptoms during her high school years at age 15. Sensory symptoms included numbness, finding an immense change in her body temperature that felt like a burning sensation combined with the prickling sensation of pins and needles throughout her body. As her condition got worse, her left leg became numb. After seeing a physician about her troubled leg, she was diagnosed with Bursitis along her hip area in 2002.

Despite experiencing those later physical problems she is quite capable in walking about. Occasionally, she will experience a relapse and when that happens she controls that spreading problem with steroid injections, which helps stabilize her problems. Julie also depends on a disease modifying

therapy such as the use of an injection, which has helped to control her reoccurring fatigue, which is another symptom of MS. Her disease modifying therapy requires that she inject a dose of Copaxone, which helps to reduce the number of lesions that cause fatigue throughout her body.

Despite her occasional reoccurring problems with fatigue she seems to manage her MS quite well and elaborated with the Edmonton Street News on how she manages to take it one day at a time. Kelndorfer said, "Well, before I was diagnosed, my aunt had been diagnosed with progressive MS. She passed away when she was in her fifties. At first diagnosis, you fear what you don't know. She was living with it. You know you have that fear every day, because you don't know what it's going to be like. You don't know when the next relapse will occur. My family and I take a really pro-active approach. We get involved with the MS walk. We're invited to the MS bike tour. We live each day to our fullest, because you don't know when it's going to take something away from you like your mobility, or your state from before."

MS walk manager Kathy Mendes also took time out for an interview with the Edmonton Street News and said she was quite pleased with the results of this year's event. Mendes said, "It was a great event. I look forwards to it next year. Hopefully it will be a success."

This year's title sponsor was Enerflex who gave generously along with other various local sponsors while providing an array of resources on site.

200 volunteers helped make the event a success and thanks also to the 1800 walk participants who helped raise pledges while raising a total in \$500,000. That money will be donated for MS programs, services and research in hopefully finding a cure for MS.

By John Zapantis

Remembering My Uncle Scam

I sat around the apartment trying to find something about my uncle to write I told my wife before she went for groceries that I planned on staying home to work on it. I plopped myself in front of the computer and realized that I knew so little about the facts of his life. It made the task harder, and while my wife shopped I sat in front of a blank screen, peeking often at the television watching shows I saw many times already. I got away from the distraction, made my way to the bedroom, and lay down and put a pillow on my head and thought of wonderful things to write. You would be impressed by those wonderful things. When I came back to the computer, the wonder and all the ideas deserted me. I talked to my mother about him hoping for a little oasis of thought. I asked her how he got his name. It was something I tried to avoid, his name--his nickname, but I knew that it was important to know it since it defined who he was in his life, and now in his memory. His given name was John, but everyone called him Scam. He got his nickname from my grandfather (not my biological grandfather) and my grandfather got it from the neighbours, the Scammahorns. "You little Scammahorn!" he would call him--this was according to my mom.

"I don't know why he called him a Scammahorn," she told me.

I suppressed my next question relieved that I got at least a little inspiration from a simple conversation, and imagined a dirty young boy, a Scammahorn running free in the wilds of northern Alberta. "Was uncle Scam even grand-dad's son?" That's what I wanted to ask.

It could be the reason for the name Scammahorn--Scam. My grandmother is a strong-willed Cree woman who left the

reserve before most of her children were born and she gave up all her rights in the process. No one told her who to marry, or who to have children with. She had her way, and everyone else in the family was left to deal with the consequences. It is no surprise then that my grandfather was not actually my grandfather, but the fact that he wasn't did not matter, and it would not be a stretch to think that a Scammahorn had invaded that little house north of Peace River. In the end it, that too did not matter. Scam got his name, and the facts of it do not have any bearing on my memory.

I don't know the year he was born, his first love, or where he learned to play guitar. In fact, the more I thought about the facts, the more I realized how little I knew about them and that life far from any city, paved road, or telephone line. My ignorance of the facts does not lessen the need and the power to love and remember Uncle Scam.

It was 1954 or thereabouts when he was born. Thereabouts means I am unsure when--I could ask my mother about the day or the year for that matter, but it was 1953 or thereabouts I am sure. He grew before my memory. When I had come to know him he was already a man, my uncle.

I heard stories of his youth, about the doghouse in the midst of summer. As if I am there, I can see the gnats dancing in the still air and the dust-reflected-light--the slanted light of a late summer afternoon, as the young boy appears, emerging from the doghouse, stretching, yawning... The day-dream melts away as the dog becomes the boy once again. I remember his with hair messy and dirty, his clothes in a ruffle, still yawning, although I have no real recollection.

Uncle Scam was a teaser, yelling down the stairs at bedtime to his scared young

nieces who came to visit and who had to sleep in the strange basement, "I hope that ghost doesn't get you!" Out would go the light. He bugged another cousin about his skinny legs. That cousin would rush to get his pants on when my uncle Scam would visit.

My first actual memory of him was in the apartment on 118 Ave. when Safeway still dominated the end of 124 St. There was a hobby shop along the avenue. He bought my brother a model of a Fokker Dr.1 --the Red Baron's tri-plane, and I got a Sopwith Camel. We buried ten dollars by a pole in the alley buried treasure; I look for that pole to this day when we drive north on 127 St. We shot his pellet gun at the toolbox at the end of the hall in his apartment. We had a drawing contest, and I won.

There are many things to say about him, there are many canyons and dark valleys that were in his life to counter the highlights. But I choose not to remember those as being part of his character, despite his alcohol and other addictions, because they weren't, although they dominated his life and were the cause of his death.

This is how I choose to remember him, now that he is gone; with these simple points of memory he seems to me to be a more complete person. I choose to remember him as a child remembers. It is a more honest representation than if I had explained his demise and decay tainted by my own judgements, or hopes that I had for him. He died alone, far from where we knew him. There is nothing grand to say, and there are no lessons learned. He was someone who is like us all. He lived and he died, and we remember.

By Patrick O'Connor
redegger@shaw.ca

The Role of the Father



Photo Maria B

A true father is not the one that wears the title but the man that has the commitment to be there for his children until the end of time.

A Father's essence resides in each member of what constitutes a family; it is the thread of gold that forms the tapestry of what God intended for us to have as a family. A Father is a creator of cherished memories of peace and understanding that will remain. No relationship is more pivotal to children's emotional development and identity than their relationship with their parents.

Fathers come in many forms, but the ones that only "wear the tag" have a common characteristic. They have failed to realize that to be "fathers" is not just a name but a life long commitment and when they choose to medicate themselves with alcohol or/and drugs they fail to put their children's best interests first. Instead of being the protectors, they become the bullies, the enforcers, the cowards that are the protagonists of domestic terrorism in their homes.

As a child I formed the projection of my father as the majestic manifestation of strength, greatness and goodness. How wrong I was. His handsome appearance was completely overshadowed by his self hate, insecurity and the anger that he was nursing in his heart. As a result he projected all that ugliness on me through his look, his rejection, his lack of respect, his vile words and all the pain he was able to inflict on an innocent child. He was a social alcoholic, who was fun outside of his house but in his house he reigned with an iron hand.

He used to tell me "you are so ugly, I can't stand the sight of you". He used to claim I was clumsy; I could not learn. Because he was my father I believed everything he said and I lived my life carrying with me those strong beliefs that affected my life in a destructive way.

I remember an instance when I was four years old and he arrived home drunk and he put my younger sister, who was two years old, and me on a horse and gave me the leads. My sister was in front of me and when the horse chose to put his head down she slid down, breaking her arm. I was seriously reprimanded and my father blamed me for the injury on my sister, making me feel awful. This is a clear example of the abuse and the blame that innocent children endure at the hands of irresponsible parents. They have no one to defend them in the process or to make any kind of sense; survival becomes crazy making, very confusing and a burden that is hard to carry through the guilt that is imposed. It is draining and very toxic.

My father's abandonment when I was six years old enabled me to regain some love and acceptance of myself but the damage from the emotional and physical abuse at his hands became the foundation of my identity. I struggled through my formative years. At age eight, I used to cross the street with my eyes closed so a car would hit me. I felt that I was so flawed that I did not deserve to live.

In my father's distorted thoughts, he was able to see us as "bad daughters and son". He was never able to recognize how he failed as a father and how toxic he was. When I was grown up I went to visit him, when he was old. One day when he was taking a nap, I was able to realize that he was a frail old man. I told myself, "He can not hurt me any more." At that time I knew that I could try to forgive him. I wrote many letters and burned them after citing all the things that he had done to me and how he hurt me. Eventually I was able to forgive him and through humor I was able to rekindle some kind of relationship with him before he died. I am glad I did that.

When I stopped taking responsibility for all the abuse I endured at the hands of my parents, I was able to see myself through the

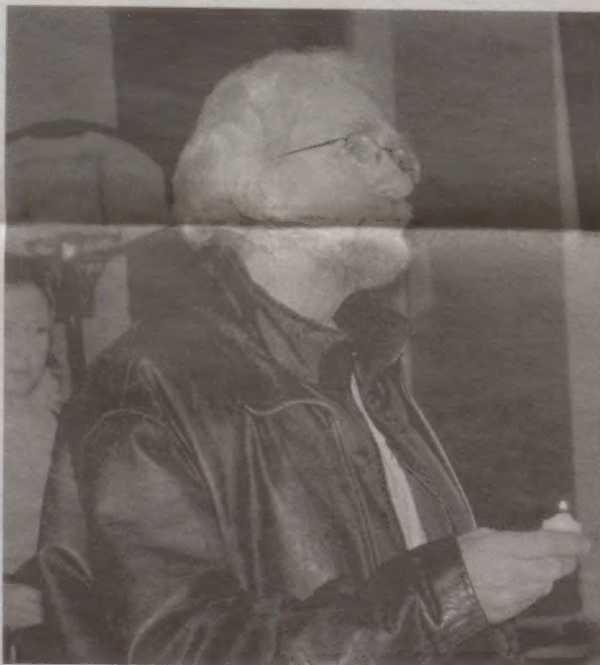
eyes of our Creator and I was able to live in clarity. From powerlessness I am able to realize that I am a very strong person whose intention in life is to convey to my children their importance in this world. I was able to provide them with the kind of environment where they felt respected and unconditionally loved.

I honor my husband, the man that chose to forsake his opportunity to have children of his own to become the father and protector of my three children. His commitment, unconditional love and true devotion to our family have unfolded right from the core of his heart. He is the source of love and admiration from every one of our children and grandchildren, adding a new member of our family that we have adopted in our hearts as a granddaughter; she is four years old and her essence as a child is truly illuminating. We are so truly blessed.

There are millions of children feeling the void that an absent father has left, I know we can not make a difference to all of them but if we can make a difference in this little girl's life that is all I ask to be able to do.

Maria B

Visiting helps a depressed patient in hospital



I was depressed from December 8 to April 17. Most of the time I slept 12 to 14 hours a day and only got up for meals and the special groups such as "Get Fit", "My Mental Health", "Community Resources", "Work Ideas", "Yoga" and "My Spirituality".

One person came to visit me three times. My mother came every evening for an hour and played tile rummy with me. Otherwise, only three people visited me.

I hated having visitors. I would rather sleep escaping form reality. I felt sad and depressed.

The ideal visitor brings a flowering plant, which can cheer a patient up for weeks. Bringing a box of chocolates, nuts, dried fruit or a variety of fruit and a get well card with words of encouragement and the promise that you love the patient and are praying for them daily helps a lot. Bringing a jar of home made jam is also a good idea, or giving the patient some money so he or she can buy a snack. The main thing is showing the patient that you care.

It is a good idea to ask the patient to go for a walk with you or to have fellowship time in the cafeteria with healthy drinks and food. A patient will usually appreciate it if you take him or her for a meal, preferably off the hospital grounds. A depressed patient will usually prefer a short visit but it is

important to be sensitive and to ask the patient how long he or she wants you to stay.

Reading the patient something from the Bible and/or a good book or magazine can be helpful as well as singing a song or playing one for them. Music is good therapy. Praying with them briefly is one of the most important things because it helps the patient to realize God's presence and love for him or her.

I started a patients' welcoming committee while I was on unit 93. Talk to someone from the committee about the patient you are visiting to enquire about how he or she is doing and how the patient can best be helped. When with a patient avoid using the word "should". Instead use the terms, "It would be wise for you I think...", "I'm praying that you will..." or "Is there some way I can encourage you to" such as when you are attempting to get a person to get up out of bed, to read, to go for coffee, or to attend functions like the hospital groups.

One thing that helped me most was when I asked Jesus to take over the steering wheel of my life. I trust him to drive my life for the best.

By Peter (Pedro) Schultz

Notice to all poets!

The Edmonton Street News Society will be publishing a poetry book. Anyone who wishes to submit a poem is welcome to send in submission(s). Please note that vulgarity will not be accepted, and please proof read your poetry since it will be published as is. Poetry not published in the book will be published in future issues of Edmonton Street News. Please email or mail in your submissions to The Edmonton Street News, 9533-106S Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 0S9, or email, whisperofmercy@yahoo.ca email. Submissions will be accepted until July 31st 2011. If have any questions please call Angelique at (780)716-5553.

Mamma's Chickens



Chapter 34 England

Other than a trip to Miami I had never been on a plane before let alone a Trans Atlantic flight. It was really overwhelming to see nothing anywhere but water, water, water. Trust me that can be quite a disquieting thought for the inexperienced traveler. If the plane crashes where do you go? But somehow I got through it without showing too much nervousness to my small son. When we finally landed in Manchester it was a great relief; there Kevin was waiting with open arms for both of us.

He drove us to his home, which was a stone cottage outside of Chester and just inside the Welsh border. The cottage was small with two bedrooms and very quaint. It was heated entirely by a coal fireplace that would not only heat the house but the water, too, if you were lucky enough to get started. Most of the day was spent trying to light the coal, which was very difficult so I spent most of my time shivering trying to figure it out.

And what were my impressions of England? First, the people were beautiful, sincere people, very genuine and helpful, but with their failing economy none could understand why I would leave Canada to come there. The busses and the open-air markets were held in each small town and I travelled to the small towns. Every morning I would walk Jordon to school and then go around to the various shops and buy what we needed. This was a lot like a social event as you met your neighbors and the shopkeepers. You carried a large basket and bought just so

many potatoes, etc. I, being used to shopping by the week, went to the butcher and order four to five different kinds of meats and wonder why every one looked so strangely at me. It wasn't till that night Kevin that explained the difference, and said I must have made the butcher's day as everyone else only ordered one thing.

Everything about England was green and very lush. I soon found out why. It never stopped raining, or if it wasn't raining there was a fine mist that covered everything all the time. Their really was a huge difference in the way they lived and how we lived. I soon found out that Kevin considered it his right to leave me alone every night until 10 o'clock when he would roll in the door half smashed. Since I knew no one there I would say, "Take me with you," but apparently that was against the rules. What rules you say? The one said that woman only got taken out on Saturday night. It was a hard and fast rule of Kevin's.

They say you don't know someone until you live with them. I started to have serious doubts about my forthcoming nuptials when the groom kept changing his mind; one day he said yes the next day no. In a fit of anger one night I picked up my divorce papers, crumpled them up threw them in the fire and with scorn in my voice and venom dripping from my eyes I yelled; "Now you can't marry me."

After that things started to get a little testy around the cottage. Kevin owned a pit bull named Sandy and although it was illegal he fought him and Sandy was a winner. In fact we had to keep him tied because he had torn the throats out of several cattle nearby. Personally he scared me and I had to find a way to win Sandy's favor unknown to Kevin. I had always assumed the way to male's affections was either through his stomach or other lower parts of the anatomy, which left me with only one option if I was to build a secret alliance with this canine character that would advantage me later. I had to find his weakness. Fortunately this wasn't too hard.

Every day I introduced fluffy cream delights into his otherwise boring diet. Instant respect if not friendship was soon secretly formed between-us, which was to pay off in great dividends latter when Kevin tried to sick the dog on me. Sandy just kind of opened one eye looked at him and I'm sure

he thought, "Are you crazy? She's the one who gives me the cram puffs."

The IRA was very active at the time in the UK. It was all around us. This frightened me as I was not used to that scale of violence. Suddenly the cottage lost a lot of its charm, plus the three week return on my plane ticket was running out and then how would I get home. The pressure was on. I was either going to make a permanent home in England or return to Canada. With one last proposal from Kevin I opted for home and Mama's chickens.

Soon I landed in Saint John rich in experiences and full of enchanting tales, but nothing else. Everything I'd had of material value was gone. It had all been sold.

Sharon Spencer

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PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

NEW LIFE ON THE AVENUE

Fifty years ago Alberta Avenue (118th Ave.) was the fashionable place to shop in Edmonton. A slow decline saw a reversal in fortunes for the street, and Alberta Avenue became one of the least favoured addresses for business, an area known for crime not high fashion.

That has changed, and Alberta Avenue is once again becoming a choice destination for people from across Edmonton, through the hard work of organizations such as the Alberta Avenue Business Association and Arts on the Ave.

The City of Edmonton and the community are working together on a neighbourhood revitalization project to improve both the social and physical aspects of this area. Streets, businesses and green spaces are being improved, fostering a vibrant community life on the Avenue once more.

In recent years Alberta Avenue has become known as a destination for arts lovers, with diverse offerings at places such as the Avenue Theatre, the Carrot and the former Alberta Cycle Building (right next to my office).

Alberta Avenue is also becoming a destination for those who enjoy good food. There are restaurants and bakeries to satisfy every taste and appetite, with it seems more opening each week. A sampling of what is available can be found online in the "Taste of The Avenue" brochure (at www.avenueinitiative.ca). On the Avenue you will find more than 40 food options, including the Thursday farmers' market. If you want to travel the culinary world you can do so, with offerings from Mexico, Portugal, East Africa, Italy, the Middle East, China, Asia, Spain, the Caribbean, Poland and Vietnam all located in just a few blocks.

I think the revitalization of Alberta Avenue is a great thing for our community.

What do you think?

780-495-3261 www.petergoldring.ca



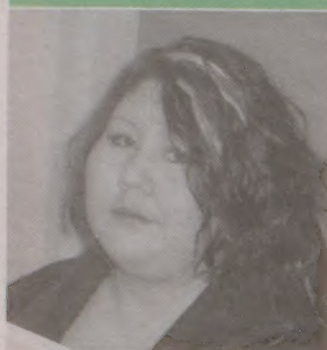
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Choosing to be a single parent



When I was nineteen years old, and my son was one month old, I looked at my life; my husband was verbally and physically abusive. I called my mother on the phone and asked her to come

and pick us up. I remember waiting on the street nervously watching the traffic, hoping we would be gone before he (my husband) came back. For a time I stayed with my mom, then a few nights at the women's shelter because my ex-husband was making death threats. For the next five years I had a custody battle. I was told that since I didn't have proof of anything the best I could get

was joint custody, because even an axe murderer has the right to see his son.

I know that there are many very nice men in the world, but after what I went through with my father, and with my husband, as well as horror stories that I have heard about abusive step-parents, I just couldn't bring myself to date. As a result I have managed to keep my son's life stable. I have a good support network with my mom, my sister, and a counsellor. The joys of being a mother, of seeing my son grow and change has been fulfilling, and very enriching for my life.

It's hard to believe that almost fifteen years this June is when I began my road to freedom. I don't receive any financial aid from my ex-husband because he is on AISH. I know that sometimes I try to over compensate, and buy the special little treasures for

my son that he desires, but I think anyone would want his or her child to have good things. I make sure never to bring him with me to the food bank, or to wait in line at the welfare office. I don't want him to think of himself as poor. Even as my shoes get another hole in them, I am struggling to save up to buy him good shoes, like all his friends have, and a new outfit or two for summer. I know in some ways finding someone else to marry, to help me raise my son, to carry half of the responsibility, could have been very nice, I just don't trust a man enough to risk what I do have. Which is a loving son and an extended family that have helped raise my son. Also I have freedom. Freedom to read and write, to sing, and to draw, to live my life without fear, or shame. Even now as I wonder if I should only pay part of my power bill to give my son a birthday party, I wouldn't change the choices that I have made in my life. The trade off is that we live in peace, happiness, and above all love.

By Angelique Branston

Left at the tavern door



Photo By Andie W.L.

This is a story about an old East end side hotel and tavern that once stood on the corner of Macleod Trail and 9th Avenue SE. and was called the Imperial. It was a seamy establishment that was torn down in the early

1980's. It was busiest at the end of the month when everyone got their welfare, Canada and old age pension cheques. Almost everyone I encountered on the street in the area was intoxicated or had some kind of drug addiction and was hanging out on the sidewalk to deal with the alcohol, pain killers and other drug related torture. Almost every bar in a two - block radius had been packed to capacity with the Kimatapikseses, (Siksika language meaning street people) and a mix of other multi-cultural people. I had spent the whole day in the bar from when it opened until I was thrown out, when I became too intoxicated to drink anymore. I was grabbed by the shoulder and arm, thrown out the east door and left lying on the sidewalk next to Macleod Trail SE. I still remember the person who threw me out, a white man that I occasionally meet at a local restaurant in the Inglewood area. He is a man with negative stereotypes in his attitude. Every time I see him I think of how he targeted the First Nations women and men when removing them from the bar! I remember him throwing out the First Nations, Metis and Inuit patrons much more than any other mainstream and multi-cultural patrons. It was a time in my life when I drank and binged heavily for days on end. I had lost my guy friends, who were around my age and some of the senior

cronies who died from chronic heavy drinking. One of the guy friends I spent some time with while staying at his place on 8th Avenue SE. had been taken to the hospital to recover from his alcoholic condition. There were many guys my age and a number of old cronies that I would never see again because they went to a nursing home or an assisted living place. We eventually lost contact with each other. There were women my age and some a lot older in their senior years, whom I didn't spend a lot of time with because of competition and bullying behaviour as most of the women were very jealous of me because I was more popular with all ages of men. They liked my sense of humour, much like my friends do today. It was because I am an Aboriginal woman and was more attractive and younger than a lot of the women around at that time - I was a young and vibrant woman and I have a bar patron sense of humour. My friends and acquaintances have shared long nights in the coffee shop, a social free time to enjoy hanging out with me because of the jokes and the sense of humour that is a part of my personality today. There were places in the east end at that time that I would go when I needed a place to get some sleep and have a meal, a bath and to wash my clothes. There was an old cronie that I knew, who had just recently been taken to detox to dry out. I then found out that this guy had other health problems and was kept in the hospital. One dark, windy cold and overcast rainy night, I remember drinking for a good part of the night in the former Imperial Hotel until the bar waiter refused to serve me any more drinks, due to the behavior of the rounder's I was sitting with. I remember seeing at a whole table full of draft beer glasses with the white retro lines around the edges, and the long necked glass beer bottles covering the whole bar table. The long necked glass beer

bottles were \$1.90 each. I got up to leave and left through one of the Macleod Trail SE. doors. I remember making my way around the hotel and sitting outside in the parking lot trying to get sober. I was very vulnerable, innocent and open prey to any man. It was very late and almost closing time.

I eventually became somewhat sober and was feeling groggy, dizzy, nauseated, dehydrated, and sick to my stomach. I began to feel hungry as I became more sober. Then the next thing I remember was waking up the following morning lying up against the wall in the doorway of the tavern. I was in a shocked state not knowing where I was, terrified and not really comprehending how I got there, struggling to gain consciousness and come out of an alcohol induced sleep. I was suddenly blasted with the wind, picking up a smell of stale spilled alcohol, cigarette butts, rotting takeout food, vomit and urine. There were paper and plastic bags blowing in the wind. There was this presence in the air, as of a bad fight that had happened! There were broken beer bottles and bloodied clothing.

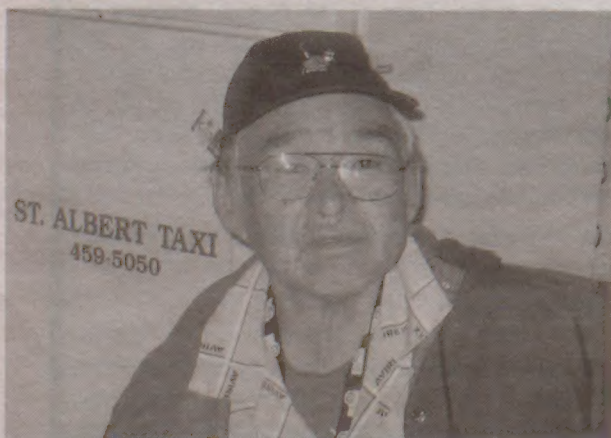
I watched the blood being washed away by the rain showers spilling off the curb. The smell was coming from the area across from the other corner of the door. I remember crying out loud, trying to comfort myself with some self-talk, "you're going to be all right, you are alive, you didn't end up in a violent fight somewhere and being left here". I remember feeling numb. I was shaking and felt terribly cold. I had this pounding headache and the dry heaves. I only had a spring/summer worn out jean jacket for a coat. I had gotten the coat from a charity clothing bin at the Inner-City Drop - In on 1st Street SE.

I began to feel humiliation, despair and unworthiness as I suddenly felt the wet area on my leg as I was getting ready to move the bottles out from under me so I could stand up to see if I was all right. I stood up and my whole body was shaking and my legs were quivering. I felt stiff and sore as I checked my pants and the rest of my clothing. I was only wet on the side of my thigh and I saw that I had been lying in the spilled liquor from beer bottles that were lying on the stairs and the nearby sidewalk. I checked to see if any of my clothing had been removed or unbuttoned. I was very lucky that I wasn't sexually or physically assaulted and there wasn't anything obvious or seriously wrong enough to be alarmed about. When I needed the bathroom, the only place to go was behind an abandoned vehicle in the parking lot.

I staggered back to where I had been sitting in the tavern doorway. I really needed something to drink, my mouth was dry and I felt dehydrated

By Andie W.L.

In Retrospect



In retrospect, I need your utmost vision

Whatever you do is second.

You have given life such as you know it a blow

How you perceive a consideration is based on your beginning.

At the end you will never be fully satisfied Gatherings of all sorts are implacable, yet achievable

Ascendance is yours upon meek approach to a society worth your presence.

The way of life centers with you.

By Paul Kailek